That Jesus Was Born a Jew

Martin Luther

edited by

Nate Hoover

Apocalypse Press

That Jesus Was Born a Jew

A new lie about me is being circulated. I am supposed to have preached and written that Mary, the mother of God, was not a virgin either before or after the birth of Christ, but that she conceived Christ through Joseph, and had more children after that. Above and beyond all this, I am supposed to have preached a new heresy, namely, that Christ was [through Joseph, the physical] the seed of Abraham [again, to imply Christ's conception was a mundane joining of Joseph and Mary]. How these lies tickle my good friends, the papists! Indeed, because they condemn the Gospel it serves them right that they should have to satisfy and feed their heart's delight and joy with lies. I would venture to wager my neck that none of those very liars who allege such great things in honor of the mother of God

believes in his heart a single one of these articles. Yet with their lies they pretend that they are greatly concerned about the Christian faith.

But after all, it is such a poor miserable lie that I despise it and would rather not reply to it. In these past three years I have grown quite accustomed to hearing lies, even from our nearest neighbors. And they in turn have grown accustomed to the noble virtue of neither blushing nor feeling ashamed when they are publicly convicted of lying. They let themselves be chided as liars, yet continue their lying. Still they are best Christians, striving with all that they have and are to devour the Turk and to extirpate all heresy.

Since for the sake of others, however, I am compelled to answer these lies, I thought I would also write something useful in addition, so that I do not vainly steal the reader's time with [200] such dirty rotten business. Therefore, I will cite from Scripture the reasons that move me to believe that Christ was a Jew born of a virgin, that I might perhaps also win some Jews to the Christian faith. Our fools, the popes, bishops, sophists, and monks — the crude asses' heads — have hitherto so treated the Jews that anyone who wished to be a good Christian would almost have had to become a Jew. If I had been a Jew and had seen such dolts and blockheads govern and teach the Christian faith, I

would sooner have become a hog than a Christian.

They have dealt with the Jews as if they were dogs rather than human beings; they have done little else than deride them and seize their property. When they baptize them they show them nothing of Christian doctrine or life, but only subject them to popishness and monkery. When the Jews then see that Judaism has such strong support in Scripture, and that Christianity has become a mere babble without reliance on Scripture, how can they possibly compose themselves and become right good Christians? I have myself heard from pious baptized Jews that if they had not in our day heard the Gospel they would have remained Jews under the cloak of Christianity for the rest of their days. For they acknowledge that they have never yet heard anything about Christ from those who baptized and taught them.

I hope that if one deals in a kindly way with the Jews and instructs them carefully from Holy Scripture, many of them will become genuine Christians and turn again to the faith of their fathers, the prophets and patriarchs. They will only be frightened further away from it if their Judaism is so utterly rejected that nothing is allowed to remain, and they are treated only with arrogance and scorn. If the apostles, who also were Jews, had dealt with us Gentiles as we Gentiles

deal with the Jews, there would never have been a Christian among the Gentiles. Since they dealt with us Gentiles in such brotherly fashion, we in our turn ought to treat the Jews in a brotherly manner in order that [201] we might convert some of them. For even we ourselves are not yet all very far along, not to speak of having arrived.

When we are inclined to boast of our position we should remember that we are but Gentiles, while the Jews are of the lineage of Christ. We are aliens and in-laws; they are blood relatives, cousins, and brothers of our Lord. Therefore, if one is to boast of flesh and blood, the Jews are actually nearer to Christ than we are, as St. Paul says in Romans 9[:5]. God has also demonstrated this by His Acts, for to no nation among the Gentiles has He granted so high an honor as He has to the Jews. For from among the Gentiles there have been raised up no patriarchs, no apostles, no prophets, indeed, very few genuine Christians either. And although the Gospel has been proclaimed to all the world, yet He committed the Holy Scriptures, that is, the law and the prophets, to no nation except the Jews, as Paul says in Romans 3[:2] and Psalm 147[:19-20], "He declares His Word to Jacob, His Statutes and Ordinances to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any other nation; nor revealed his ordinances to them."

Accordingly, I beg my dear papists, should they be growing weary of denouncing me as a heretic, to seize the opportunity of denouncing me as a Jew. Perhaps I may yet turn out to be also a Turk, or whatever else my fine gentlemen may wish.

Christ is promised for the first time soon after Adam's fall, when God said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall crush your head, and you shall bruise His Heel" [Genesis 3:15]. Here I defer demonstrating that the serpent spoke possessed of the devil, for no dumb beast is so clever that it can utter or comprehend human speech, much less speak or inquire about such exalted matters as the commandment of God, as the serpent does here. Therefore, it must certainly have been a rational, highly intelligent, and mighty spirit which was able to utter human speech, deal so masterfully with God's commandments, and seize and employ human reason.

Since it is certain that a spirit is something higher than a [202] man, it is also certain that this is an evil spirit and an enemy of God, for it breaks God's Commandment and acts contrary to His Will. Therefore, it is undoubtedly the devil. And so the Word of God which speaks of crushing the head must refer also to the devil's head; though not to the exclusion of the natural head of the serpent, for with a single word he speaks of both

devil and serpent as of one thing. Therefore, he means both heads. But the devil's head is that power by which the devil rules, that is, sin and death, by means of which he has brought Adam and all Adam's descendants under his control.

This Seed of the woman therefore, because He is to crush the devil's power, that is, sin and death, must not be an ordinary man, since all men have been brought under the devil through sin and death. So He must certainly be without sin. Now human nature does not produce such seed or fruit, as has been said, for with their sin they are all under the devil. How, then, can this be? The Seed must be the natural child of a woman; otherwise, it could not be or be called the seed of the woman. On the other hand, as has been pointed out, human nature and birth does not produce such seed. Therefore, the solution must ultimately be that this Seed is a true natural son of the woman; derived from the woman, however, not in the normal way but through a special act of God, in order that the Scripture might stand, that He is the Seed only of a woman and not of a man. For the text [Genesis 3:15] clearly states that he will be the Seed of woman.

This is thus the first Passage in which the mother of this child is described as a virgin. She is his true natural mother; yet she is to conceive and bear supernaturally, by God, without a man, in order

that her Child may be a distinctive man, without sin, yet having ordinary flesh and blood like other men. This could not have been the case had he been begotten by a man like other men because the flesh is consumed and corrupted by evil lust, so that its natural act of procreation cannot occur without sin. Whatever conceives and bears through an act of the flesh produces also a carnal and sinful fruit. This is why St. Paul says in Ephesians 1 [Ephesians 2:3] that we are all by nature children of wrath. [203]

Now this Passage [Genesis 3:15] was the very first Gospel message on Earth. For when Adam and Eve, seduced by the devil, had fallen and were summoned for judgment before God, Genesis 3 [:9], they were in peril of death and the anguish of hell, for they saw that God was against them and condemned them; they would gladly have fled from him, but could not. Had God let them remain in their anguish, they would soon have despaired and perished. But when, after their terrible punishment, He let them hear his comforting promise to raise up from the woman's Seed one who would tread upon the serpent's head, their spirits were quickened again. From that promise they drew comfort, believing firmly in that blessed seed of the woman which would come and crush the serpent's head, that is, sin and death, by which they had been crushed and corrupted.

The fathers, from Adam, on, preached and inculcated this Gospel, through which they acknowledge the promised Seed of this woman and believed in Him. And so they were sustained through faith in Christ just as we are; they were true Christians like ourselves. Only, in their day this Gospel was not proclaimed publicly throughout the world, as it would be after the coming of Christ, but remained solely in the possession of the holy fathers and their descendants down to the time of Abraham.

The second promise of Christ was to Abraham, Genesis 22 [:18], where God said, "In your Seed shall all the Gentiles be blessed." If all the Gentiles are to be blessed, then it is certain that otherwise, apart from this Seed of Abraham, they were all unblessed and under a curse. From this it follows that human nature has nothing but cursed seed and bears nothing but unblessed fruit; otherwise, there would be no need for all of them to be blessed through this Seed of Abraham. Whoever says "all" excludes no one; therefore, apart from Christ, all who are born of man must be under the devil, cursed in sin and death.

Here again the mother of God is proven to be a pure virgin. For since God cannot lie, it was inevitable that Christ should be the Seed of Abraham, that is, his natural flesh and blood, like all of Abraham's descendants. On the other hand, be-

cause He was to be the blessed Seed which should bless all others, He could not be begotten by man, since such children, as has been said, [204] cannot be conceived without sin because of the corrupt and tainted flesh, which cannot perform its function without taint and sin.

Thus the Word, by which God promises that Christ will be the seed of Abraham, requires that Christ be born of a woman and be her natural child. He does not come from the earth like Adam [Genesis 2:7]; neither is He from Adam's rib like Eve [Genesis 2:21-22]. He comes rather like any woman's child, from her seed. The Earth was not the natural seed for Adam's body; neither was Adam's rib the natural seed for Eve's body. But the virgin's flesh and blood, from which children come in the case of all other women, was the natural seed of Christ's body. And she too was of the seed of Abraham.

On the other hand, this Word by which God promises his blessing upon all Gentiles in Christ requires that Christ may not come from a man, or by the act of a man; for work of the flesh (which is cursed) is incompatible with that which is blessed and is pure blessing. Therefore, this Blessed Fruit had to be the fruit of a woman's body only, not of a man, even though that very woman's body came from man, indeed, even from Abraham and Adam. So this mother is a

virgin, and yet a true natural mother; not, however, by natural capacity or power, but solely through the Holy Spirit and Divine Power.

Now this Passage [Genesis 22:18] was the Gospel from the time of Abraham down to the time of David, event to the time of Christ. It is a short saying, to be sure, but a rich Gospel, subsequently inculcated and used in marvelous fashion by the fathers both in writing and in preaching. Many thousands of sermons have been preached from this Passage, and countless souls saved. For it is the Living Word of God, in which Abraham and his descendants believed, and by which they were redeemed and preserved from sin and death and the power of the devil. However, it too was not yet proclaimed publicly to all the world, as happened after the coming of Christ, but remained solely in the possession of the fathers and their descendants.

[205] Now just take a look at the perverse lauders of the mother of God. If you ask them why they hold so strongly to the virginity of Mary, they truly could not say. These stupid idolaters do nothing more than to glorify only the mother of God; they extol her for her virginity and practically make a false deity of her. But Scripture does not praise this virginity at all for the sake of the mother; neither was she saved on account of her virginity. Indeed, cursed be this and every other

virginity of it exists for its own sake, and accomplishes nothing better than its own profit and praise.

The Spirit extols this virginity, however, because it was needful for the conceiving and bearing of this Blessed Fruit. Because of the corruption of our flesh, such blessed fruit could not come, except through a virgin. Thus this tender virginity existed in the service of others to the Glory of God, not to its own glory. If it had been possible for him to have come from a woman, he would not have selected a virgin for this, since virginity is contrary to the physical nature within us, was condemned of old in the Law, and is extolled here solely because the flesh is tainted and its built-in physical nature cannot bestow her fruit except by means of an accursed act.

Hence we see that St. Paul nowhere calls the mother of God a virgin, but only a woman, as he says in Galatians 3 [Galatians 4:4], "The Son of God was born of a woman." He did not mean to say she was not a virgin, but to extol her virginity to the highest with the praise that is proper to it, as much as to say: In this birth none but a woman was involved, no man participated; that is, everything connected with it was reserved to the woman, the conceiving, bearing, suckling, and nourishing of the child were functions no man can perform. It is therefore the child of a woman

only; hence, she must certainly be a virgin. But a virgin may also be a man; a mother can be none other than a woman.

For this reason, too, Scripture does not quibble or speak about the virginity of Mary after the birth of Christ, a matter about which the hypocrites are greatly concerned, as if it were something of the utmost importance on which our whole salvation [206] depended. Actually, we should be satisfied simply to hold that she remained a virgin after the birth of Christ because Scripture does not state or indicate that she later lost her virginity. We certainly need not be so terribly afraid that someone will demonstrate, out of his own head apart from Scripture, that she did not remain a virgin. But the Scripture stops with this, that she was a virgin before and at the birth of Christ; for up to this point God had need of her virginity in order to give us the promised blessed seed without sin.

The third Passage is addressed to David, II Samuel 7[:12-14], "When your days are fulfilled, and you sleep with your fathers, I will raise up your Seed after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish His Kingdom forever. He shall build a House for My Name, and I will establish the Throne of His Kingdom forever. I will be His Father, and He shall be My Son." These words cannot have been spoken of

Solomon, for Solomon was not a posthumous son of David raised up after his death. Neither did God after Solomon (who during David's lifetime was born and became king) ever designate anyone as His son, give him an everlasting kingdom, or have him build such a house. Consequently, the whole Passage must refer to Christ. We will let this Passage go for the present because it is too broad and requires so much in the way of exegesis; for one would have to show here that Christ accordingly had to be the son of a woman only in order to be called here God's Child, who neither should nor could come out of an accursed act.

The fourth Passage is Isaiah 7[:14], "God himself will give you a sign. Behold, a virgin is with child, and shall bear a son." This could not have been said of a virgin who was about to be married. For what sort of a marvelous sign would that be if someone who is presently a virgin should bear a child within a year? Such is the ordinary course of nature, occurring daily before our eyes. If it is to be a Sign from God, therefore, it must be something remarkable and marvelous not given by the [207] ordinary course of nature, as is commonly the case with all God's Signs.

It is of no help for the Jews either to try to evade the issue here and come up with this way of getting around it, namely: the Sign consists in the

fact that Isaiah says flatly that the child shall be a son and not a daughter. By such an interpretation the Sign would have nothing to do with the virgin but only with the prophet Isaiah, as the one who had divined so precisely that it would not be a daughter. The text would then have to speak of Isaiah thus, "Behold, God Himself will give you a Sign, namely, that I, Isaiah, will divine that a young woman is carrying a son, and not a daughter." Such an interpretation is disgraceful and childish.

Now the text forcefully refers the sign to the woman, and states clearly that it shall be a sign when a woman bears a son. Now it certainly is no sign when a woman who is no longer virgin bears a child, be it the mother of Hezekiah or whatever woman the Jews may point to. The Sign must be something new and different, a marvelous and unique work of God, that this woman is with child; her pregnancy is to be the Sign. Now I do not deem any Jew so dense that he would not grant God sufficient power to create a child from a virgin, since they are compelled to acknowledge that he created Adam from the earth [Genesis 2:7] and Eve from Adam [Genesis 2:21-22], acts which require no less power.

But then they contend that the Hebrew text does not read, "A virgin is with child," but, "Behold, an almah is with child. [208] Almah, they say,

does not denote a virgin; the word for virgin is bethulah, while almah is the term for young damsel. Presumably, a young damsel might very well have had intercourse and be the mother of a child.

Christians can readily answer this from St. Matthew and St. Luke, both of whom apply the Passage from Isaiah [7:14] to Mary, and translate the word almah as "virgin." They are more to be believed than the whole world, let alone the Jews. Even though an angel from heaven [Galatians 1:8] were to say that almah, does not mean virgin, we should not believe it. For God the Holy Spirit speaks through St. Matthew and St. Luke; we can be sure that He understands Hebrew speech and expressions perfectly well.

But because the Jews do not accept the Evangelists, we must confront them with other evidence. In the first place, we can say, as above, that there is no marvel or sign in the fact that a young woman conceives, otherwise, we would have a perfect right to sneer at the prophet Isaiah, and say, "What women would you expect to conceive if not the young ones? Are you drunk? Or is it in your experience a rare event for a young woman to bear a son?" For this reason that strained and farfetched answer of the Jews is just a vain and feeble excuse for not keeping silent altogether.

In the second place, grant that bethulah means virgin and not almah, and the Isaiah here uses almah, not bethulah. All this too is still nothing but a poor excuse. For they act as if they did not know that in all of Scripture almah nowhere designates a woman who has had intercourse (a fact of which they are perfectly well aware). On the contrary, in every instance almah signifies a young damsel who has never known a man carnally or had intercourse. Such a person is always called a virgin, just as St. Matthew and St. Luke here translate Isaiah.

[209] Now since they are such literalists and like to argue about semantics, we will concede that bethulah is not the same word as almah. But the only point they have established thereby is that this young woman is not designated by the term "virgin." However, she is designated by another term which also means a young woman who has never had intercourse; call her by whatever term you please, in her person she is still a virgin. It is childish and disgraceful to take recourse to words when the meaning is one and the same.

Very well; to please the Jews we will not translate Isaiah thus: "Behold, a virgin is with child," lest they be confused by the word "virgin," but rather, "Behold, a maiden is with child." Now in German the word "maiden" denotes a woman who is still young, carries her crown with honor,

and wears her hair loose, so that it is said of her: She is still a maiden, not a wife (although "maiden" is not the same word as "virgin"). In like manner also, the Hebrew elem is a stripling who does not yet have a woman; and almah is a maiden who does not yet have a man, not a servant girl but one who still carries a crown. Thus the sister of Moses is called an almah in Exodus 3 [Exodus 2:8] as is Rebekah in Genesis 24[:16, 43], when they were still virgins.

Suppose I say in German, "Hans is engaged to a maiden," and someone should comment, "Well, then he is not engaged to a virgin." Why, everyone would laugh at him for vainly disputing about words if he thinks that virgin and maiden are not the same thing because they are different words. This is true also in the Hebrew, when the Jews argue with respect to this Passage in Isaiah [7:14] and say, "Isaiah does not say bethulah, but almah. I submit that among themselves their own conscience tells them this is so. Therefore, let them say what they please, bethulah [210] or almah; Isaiah means a damsel who is nubile but still wears her crown, whom in the truest German we call a maiden. Hence, the mother of God is properly called the pure maiden, that is, the pure almah.

And if I should have had to tell Isaiah what to speak, I would have had him say exactly what he

did say, not bethulah, but almah, for almah is even more appropriate here than bethulah. It is also more precise to say, "Behold, a maiden is with child," than to say, "A virgin is with child." For "virgin" is an all-embracing term which might also be applied to a woman of fifty or sixty who is no longer capable of childbearing. But "maiden" denotes specifically a young woman, nubile, capable of childbearing, but still a virgin; it includes not only the virginity, but also the youthfulness and the potential for childbearing. Hence, in German too we commonly refer to young people as maidens or maidenfolk, not virginfolk.

Therefore, the text of Isaiah [7:14] is certainly most accurately translated, "Behold, a maiden is with child." No Jew who understands both German and Hebrew can deny that this is what is said in the Hebrew, for we Germans do not say "concepit, the woman has conceived"; the preachers have so rendered the Latin into German. Rather, the German would say in his mother tongue, "The woman is with child," or, "is heavy with child," or, "is pregnant."

But here in the Hebrew it does not say, "Behold, a maiden shall be with child," as though she were not as yet. It says rather, "Behold, a maiden is with child," as though she has the fruit already in her womb and nevertheless is still a maiden, in

order that you will have to notice how the prophet himself is amazed that there stands before him a maiden who is with child even before she knows a man carnally. She was of course going to have a husband, she was physically fit and mature enough for it; but even before she gets to that she is already a mother. This is indeed a rare and marvelous thing.

This is the way St. Matthew [1:18] construes this Passage when he says, "When Mary the mother of Jesus had been [211] betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with Child of the Holy Spirit," etc. What does this mean other than that she was a young maiden who had not yet known a man although she was capable of it, but before she knew the man she was with child, and that this was an amazing thing since no maiden becomes pregnant prior to intercourse with a man? Thus, the Evangelist regarded her in the same light as did the prophet, and set her forth as the sign and wonder.

Now this refutes also the false interpretation which some have drawn from the words of Matthew, where he says, "Before they came together she was found to be with Child." They interpret this as though the Evangelist meant to say, "Later she came together with Joseph like any other wife and lay with him, but before this occurred she was with child apart from Joseph," etc.

Again, when he says, "And Joseph knew her not until she brought forth her first-born son" [Matthew 1:25], they interpret it as though the Evangelist meant to say that he knew her, but not before she had brought forth her first-born son. This was the view of Helvidius which was refuted by Jerome.

Such carnal interpretations miss the meaning and purpose of the Evangelist. As we have said, the Evangelist, like the prophet Isaiah, wishes to set before our eyes this mighty wonder, and point out what an unheard-of thing it is for a maiden to be with child before her husband brings her home and lies with her; and further, that he does not know her carnally until she first has a son, which she should have had after first having been known [212] by him. Thus, the words of the Evangelist do not refer to anything that occurred after the birth, but only to what took place before it. For the Prophet and the Evangelist, and St. Paul as well, do not treat of this virgin beyond the point where they have from her that Fruit for whose sake she is a virgin and everything else. After the Child is born they dismiss the mother and speak not about her, what became of her, but only about her Offspring. Therefore, one cannot from these words [Matthew 1:18, 25] conclude that Mary, after the birth of Christ, became a wife in the usual sense; it is therefore neither to be asserted nor believed. All the words are merely in-

dicative of the marvelous fact that she was with child and gave birth before she had lain with a man.

The form of expression used by Matthew is the common idiom, as if I were to say, "Pharaoh believed not Moses, until he was drowned in the Red Sea." Here it does not follow that Pharaoh believed later, after he had drowned; on the contrary, it means that he never did believe. Similarly when Matthew [1:25] says that Joseph did not know Mary carnally until she had brought forth her son, it does not follow that he knew her subsequently; on the contrary, it means that he never did know her. Again, the Red Sea overwhelmed Pharaoh before he got across. Here too it does not follow that Pharaoh got across later, after the Red Sea had overwhelmed him, but rather that he did not get across at all. In like manner, when Matthew [1:18] says, "She was found to be with child before they came together," it does not follow that Mary subsequently lay with Joseph, but rather that she did not lie with him.

Elsewhere in Scripture the same manner of speech is employed. Psalm 110[:1] reads, "God says to my Lord: 'Sit at My Right Hand, till I make Your enemies Your Footstool.'" Here it does not follow that Christ does not continue to sit there after His enemies are placed beneath His Feet. Again, in Genesis 28[:15], "I will not leave

you until I have done all that of which I have spoken to you." Here God did not leave him after the fulfillment had taken place. Again, in Isaiah 42[:4], "He shall not be sad, nor troublesome, till he has established justice in the earth." [213] There are many more similar expression, so that this babble of Helvidius is without justification; in addition, he has neither noticed nor paid any attention to either Scripture or the common idiom.

This is enough for the present to have sufficiently proved that Mary was a pure maiden, and that Christ was a genuine Jew of Abraham's seed. Although more Scripture Passages might be cited, these are the clearest. Moreover, if anyone does not believe a clear saying of His Divine Majesty, it is reasonable to assume that he would not believe either any other more obscure Passages. So certainly no one can doubt that it is possible for God to cause a maiden to be with child apart from a man, since he has also created all things from nothing. Therefore, the Jews have no ground for denying this, for they acknowledge God's Omnipotence, and they have here the clear testimony of the Prophet Isaiah.

While we are on the subject, however, we wish not only to answer the futile liars who publicly malign me in these matters but we would also like to do a service to the Jews on the chance that we

might bring some of them back to their own True Faith, the one which their fathers held. To this end we will deal with them further, and suggest for the benefit of those who want to work with them a method and some Passages from Scripture which they should employ in dealing with them. For many, even of the sophists, have also attempted this; but insofar as they have set about it in their own name, nothing has come of it. For they were trying to cast out the devil by means of the devil, and not by the Finger of God [Luke 11:17-20].

In the first place, that the current belief of the Jews and their waiting upon the coming of the Messiah is erroneous is proved by the Passage in Genesis 49[:10-12] where the holy patriarch Jacob says: "The Scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a teacher from those at his feet, until the Siloh comes; and to him shall be the gathering of the nations. He will bind his foal [214] to the vine, and his ass to the choice vine. He will wash His Garments with wine, and His Mantle with the blood of grapes. His Eyes are redder than wine, and His Teeth whiter than milk." This Passage is a divine promise, which cannot lie and must be fulfilled unless heaven and earth were first to pass away. So the Jews cannot deny that for nearly fifteen hundred years now, since the fall of Jerusalem, they have had no scepter, that is, neither kingdom nor king. Therefore, the Shiloh,

or Messiah, must have come before this fifteen hundred year period, and before the destruction of Jerusalem.

If they try to say that the Scepter was also taken away from Judah at the time of the Babylonian captivity, when the Jews were transported to Babylon and remained captive for seventy years, and yet the Messiah did not come at that time, the answer is that this is not true. For during the whole period of captivity the royal line continued in the person of King Jeconiah, thereafter Zerubbabel and other princes in turn until Herod became king. For "scepter" signifies not only a kingdom, but also a hegemony, as the Jews are well aware. Furthermore, they still always had prophets. So the kingdom or hegemony never did disappear, even though for a time it existed outside of its territorial boundaries. Also, never during the captivity were all the inhabitants driven out of the land, as has happened during these [215] past fifteen hundred years when the Jews have had neither princes nor prophets.

It was for this reason that God provided them at that time with the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Haggai, and Zechariah, who proclaimed to them that they would again be freed from Babylon, in order that they would not think that this word of Jacob was false, or that the Messiah had come. But for these last fifteen hundred years they have

had no prophet to proclaim that they should again be free. God would not have permitted this state of affairs to continue for such a long time, since He did not on that occasion permit it for such a short time. He thereby gives ample indication that this prophecy [Genesis 49:10-12] must have been fulfilled.

In addition, when Jacob says here that the scepter shall endure until the Messiah comes, it clearly follows that this scepter not only must not perish but also that it must become far more glorious than it ever was previously, before the Messiah's coming. For all the Jews know full well that the Messiah's Kingdom will be the greatest and most glorious that has ever been on Earth, as we read in Psalms 2, 72, and 89. For the promise is also made to David that his throne shall endure forever [Psalms 89:4, 29, 36-37]. Now the Jews will have to admit that today their Scepter has now been nonexistent for fifteen hundred years, not to speak of its having become more glorious.

This prophecy can therefore be understood to refer to none other than Jesus Christ our Lord, who is of the Tribe of Judah and of the Royal Lineage of David. He came when the Scepter had fallen to Herold, the alien; He has been King these fifteen hundred years, and will remain King on into Eternity. For His Kingdom has spread to the ends of the Earth, as the prophets foretold

[Psalms 2:8, 72:8-11]; and the nations have been gathered to him, as Jacob says here [Genesis 49:10]. And there could not possibly be a greater King on Earth, whose Name would be exalted among more nations, than this Jesus Christ.

It is true that some Jews do indeed feel how persuasive and [216] conclusive this Passage really is. This is why they hunt up all sorts of weird ways of getting around it. But if you will notice, they only ensnare themselves. For example, they say that in this instance Shiloh does not signify the Messiah or Christ, and that therefore this Passage does not carry any weight with them. It matters not whether he is called Messiah or Shiloh; we are concerned not with the name, but with the person, with the fact that he shall appear when the scepter is taken away from Judah. No such person can be found except Jesus Christ; otherwise, the Passage is false. He will be no mere cobbler or tailor, but a lord to whom the nations will be gathered; that is, His Kingdom will be more glorious than the Scepter ever was before, as has been said.

Equally futile is another subterfuge, when they say: The nations which are gathered to Him may well be only the Jewish nation, and Shiloh means a lord. Be that as it may; I will not quarrel over what Shiloh means, although it does seem to me that it signifies a man who is prosperous, well-to-

do, has plenty, and is generous. From this comes the little word salve, which means copia [riches], felicitas [good fortune], abundantia [prosperity], an ample sufficiency of all good things, as it says in Psalm 122[:7], "Et abundantia in turribus suis" ["and prosperity within your palaces"]; that is, everything is full and sufficient and prospering, so that in German I might call shiloh well-being.

Now whether it signifies lord or whether it signifies well-being, prosper [prosperous], or felix [fortunate], at any rate it cannot be said to mean one of the former kings, princes, or teachers. For "the Scepter of Judah" certainly comprises all those of the Tribe of Judah who have been kings or princes with the exception of this Shiloh, who here is singled out and preferred above all those who have wielded the scepter of Judah as someone [217] special, because Jacob says [Genesis 49:10] the Scepter of Judah shall endure until Shiloh. What kind of talk would that be for me, to try make of Shiloh one of them who have held the Scepter of Judah and the nations, when the Passage here means that the Shiloh will come after all those others as a greater and more glorious King, and that He will have no successor. Why would he not otherwise have said, "The Scepter of Judah shall endure forever, and not wait upon Shiloh"?

Therefore, it is the Kingdom of Christ which is here described in masterly fashion, namely, that before him many should wield the Scepter of Judah until He should come Himself and take it in His Own Hands forever, and that He would have no successor, nor would there ever be another king of the Tribe of Judah. Thereby it is made clear that His Kingdom would be a spiritual kingdom, following upon the temporal kingdom; for no person can have an eternal kingdom who is himself mortal and reigns temporally. Therefore, the Scepter of Judah did indeed endure from David down to Shiloh as something temporal, having a succession of mortal kings. But now that Shiloh is come, the Scepter remains forever in the Hands of one Person; no longer does it involve a succession of kings.

From this it necessarily that this Shiloh must first die, and thereafter rise again from the dead. For since He is to come from the Tribe of Judah [Genesis 49:10], He must be a true, natural man, mortal like all the children of Judah. On the other hand, because He is to be a special king, distinguished above all who have held the Scepter of Judah before Him, and He alone is to reign forever, he cannot be a mortal man, but must be an immortal man. Therefore, He must through death put off this mortal life, and by His resurrection take on immortal life, in order that He may fulfil this prophecy and become a Shiloh to

whom all the world shall be gathered. He is to be a truly living man, a king of the Tribe of Judah, and yet immortal, eternal, and invisible, ruling spiritually in faith. But such sweet speech is still too exalted and difficult for the Jews.

But if they say: Well this Jesus of yours has never done what Jacob later says of this Shiloh, namely, "He will bind his foal to the vine, and his ass to the choice vine; he will wash his garments [218] in wine, and his mantle in the blood of grapes" [Genesis 49:11], then answer: A simpleton might perhaps take this to mean that this Shiloh would be so rich a king that in his day wine would be as common as water, used for washing clothes, etc. From the foregoing, however, we have observed that this Shiloh is to reign forever, a single person, and that He has no heirs to follow Him. All the prophets too say this. Therefore, His Kingdom cannot be a temporal one, consisting essentially of mortal and perishable goods.

And if this does not compel the interpretation that the wine and vine must be spiritual, then the very manner and nature of the words and language must compel it. For what sort of praise would it be to laud such a glorious kingdom above all kingdoms on these four grounds, namely, that its ruler binds his foal to the vine, his ass to the choice vine, and washes his garments with wine, and his mantle with the blood of

grapes? Could Jacob find no other praise than that which has to do with drinking? Must such a king have nothing else than wine? Again, is there nothing else praiseworthy in him but the fact that his eyes are redder than wine and his teeth whiter than milk? [Genesis 49:12]. What does it benefit a kingdom that its ruler has white teeth, red eyes, and binds a foal to a vine?

Assuming for a moment that these things are said concerning superfluous riches, why doesn't Jacob say much more, such as: He will wash His Garments in balsam and myrrh? That would be even more luxurious. Who ever heard of anyone longing to wash his clothes in wine? Again, why doesn't he say: He will pasture his horses in the wheat? Who ever heard of anyone wanting to tether his ass to a vine? What is the point of an ass at the vine, and clothes in the wine? The whole thing is sheer nonsense. Wine ruins clothes, and the ass is better off with thistles than with a vine. A vine would be better suited to a sheep; it could eat the leaves. This seemingly ridiculous talk therefore forcibly compels a spiritual interpretation.

Then too, why does he praise him for his red eyes and white teeth? Is there nothing else beautiful about his body than red eyes and white teeth? What kind of praise is that for so glorious and great a king? We usually praise great kings for

their strong [219] and splendid physique, and above all for their great spirit, wisdom, graciousness, fortitude, power, and glorious deeds and virtues. But in this case, only his eyes and teeth are praised; this sounds more like praise of a woman than of a man, let alone of such a king.

There can be no doubt that in these words the Spirit through Moses portrayed this person for us in the setting of a spiritual kingdom as it was to come into being and be governed. This is not the time, however, to discuss this at length. We have enough to do for the present in forcefully asserting against the Jews that the true Shiloh or Christ must have come long ago, because they been long since bereft of the kingdom and hegemony, and of prophets as well. Here the clear text stands firm and testifies that the Scepter shall remain with the Tribe of Judah until the True King comes, when for the first time it shall really hold sway.

Thus, the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ squares perfectly with this prophecy. For there was a hegemony among the Jews until He came. After His coming, however, it was destroyed, and at the same time He began the Eternal Kingdom in which He still reigns forever. That he was of the Tribe of Judah is unquestionable. Because as regards His Person He was to be an Eternal King, it could not be that He should govern in a tem-

poral and secular sense, because what is temporal will pass away. Conversely, because He had to be David's natural seed, it could not be otherwise than that He should be a natural, mortal, temporal, perishable man.

Now to be temporal and to reign eternally are two mutually contradictory concepts. Therefore, it had to turn out that He died temporally and departed this life, and again that He arose from the dead and became alive in order that He might become an Eternal King. For He had to be alive if He were to reign, because one who is dead cannot reign; and He had to die too if He were to shift from this mortal life, into which He necessarily had to enter to fulfil the Scripture which promised He would be the natural blood of David and Abraham.

So now He lives and reigns, and holds the exalted office of binding His Foal to the vine and washing His Garments in the red wine; that is, He governs our consciences with the Holy Gospel, [220] which is a most gracious preachment of God's loving-kindness, the forgiveness of sins, and redemption from death and Hell, by which all who from the heart believe it will be comforted, joyous, and, as it were, drowned in God with the overwhelming comfort of His Mercy. The Jews, however, will not listen to this interpretation until they first accept and acknowledge the fact

that Christ must have come in accordance with this prophecy. Therefore, we will let the matter rest until its own good time.

On the basis and testimony of this Passage [Genesis 49:10-12], another sensible argument is also to be proved, namely, that this Shiloh must have come at the time our Jesus Christ came, and that He can be none other than that selfsame Jesus. The prophecy says that nations shall be gathered to or be subject to this Shiloh. Now I ask the Jews: When was there ever such a man of Jewish ancestry to whom so many nations were subject as this Jesus Christ? David was a great king, and so was Solomon; but their kingdom never extended beyond a small portion of the land of Syria. This Jesus, on the contrary, is accepted as a Lord and King throughout the world, so that one may consider as fulfilled in him the prophecy from the second Psalm [v. 8], where God says to the Messiah, "I will give You the Gentiles for Your Possession, and the uttermost parts of the Earth for Your Inheritance." This had indeed come true in the person of our Jesus since the time when the Scepter was taken from the Jews; this is quite apparent and has never yet happened in the case of any other Jew. Because Shiloh was to come when Judah's Scepter was ended, and since that time no other has fulfilled these prophecies, this Jesus must certainly be the real Shiloh whom Jacob intended.

The Jews will have to admit further that the Gentiles have never once yielded themselves so willingly to a Jew for their lord and king, as to this Jesus. For although Joseph was certainly a great man in Egypt, he was neither its lord nor its king [Genesis 41:40]. And even if he had been, Egypt was a mighty small thing compared to this kingdom which everybody ascribes to this Jesus.

Again, neither in Babylon nor in Persia was either Daniel [Daniel 5:29; 6:1-3] or Mordecai [Esther 10:3] a king, although they were men of power in the government.

It is amazing that the Jews are not moved to believe in this [221] Jesus, their own flesh and blood, with whom the prophecies of Scripture actually square so powerfully and exactly, when they see that we Gentiles cling to Him so hard and fast and in such numbers that many thousands have shed their blood for His Sake. They know perfectly well that the Gentiles have always shown greater hostility toward the Jews than toward any other nation, and have been unwilling to tolerate their dominion, laws, or government. How is it then that the Gentiles should now so reverse themselves as to willingly and steadfastly surrender themselves to this Jew, and with heart and soul confess Him King of kings and Lord of lords, unless it be that here is the true Messiah, to whom God by a great miracle has made the Gen-

tiles friendly and submissive in accordance with this and numerous other prophecies?

The second Passage is Daniel 9[:24-27], where the angel Gabriel speaks to Daniel in the plainest terms about Christ, saying, "Seventy weeks are determined concerning your people and your holy city, that transgression may be finished, forgiveness sealed, iniquity atoned for, and everlasting righteousness brought in, and vision and prophecy fulfilled, and the most holy anointed. Take notice therefore and know: from the going forth of the word to rebuild Jerusalem are seven weeks and sixty-two weeks until Messiah the Prince; the streets and the wall shall be built again in a troubled time. And after sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, and they shall not be His. But the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with violence. And after the end of the war there shall remain the appointed desolation. And He shall confirm the Covenant with many in one week; and in the middle of the week sacrifice and offering shall cease," etc.

God help us! This Passage has been dealt with so variously by both Jews and Christians that one might doubt whether anything certain can be derived from it! Well this much at least we [222] will derive from it, namely, that the true Messiah must have come over one thousand and five hun-

dred years ago, just as we hold that our Jesus Christ did. The computation and exegesis we will postpone to the last, and for the first simply say: Neither Jew nor anyone else can deny that the angel Gabriel is speaking here of the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity; this took place under Nehemiah.

In the second place, Gabriel can surely be referring only to that destruction of Jerusalem which subsequently took place under the Roman emperor Titus about the thirtieth year after the ascension of our Lord. For after Jerusalem was rebuilt there was no other destruction of the city, although it had been captured at the time of the Maccabees. From this we draw the assured and incontrovertible conclusion that the Messiah of whom Gabriel here speaks must have come before the destruction [by Titus]. That, I think, is quite certain and sufficiently clear.

It is true that the Jews long ago began to feel the pressure of this mighty flood of evidence, and have anxiously defended their position with all manner of preposterous glosses. They make of this Messiah something other than the true Messiah, as for example King Cyrus of Persia, whom Isaiah in chapter 45 [Isaiah 45:1] calls a Messiah, and who was slain by Tomyris, the Scythian queen. [223] This and similar efforts are worthless excuses, capricious and unwarranted evasions,

and therefore quickly disposed of as follows: These seventy weeks (says Gabriel) are to extend to the time of a Messiah of such a sort that in his time, when the weeks have elapsed, sin and iniquity shall be finished, forgiveness and everlasting righteousness brought in, and vision and prophecy fulfilled.

Now I ask them both, Jews and everyone else: Did such things come to pass in the days if Cyrus? In the time of Cyrus and after him no more special righteousness was brought upon Earth than what existed before and since under other kings. Moreover, in the days of David and Solomon the level of righteousness was much higher than at the time of Cyrus, but Scripture does not designate this as everlasting righteousness. The righteousness of which Gabriel speaks must therefore be far superior to that which prevailed in the time of David, the most holy king, let alone to such righteousness as the pagan Cyrus had in his day.

And further, when Gabriel says here that the city of Jerusalem shall be rebuilt in seven weeks, and that afterward the Messiah shall be cut off after sixty-two weeks, how can that apply to King Cyrus, who was slain before the seven weeks began, or — if their calculation is correct — at any rate before Jerusalem was rebuilt? How can the Messiah be someone who was slain before the

rebuilding of Jerusalem, and then was cut off sixty-two weeks later after Jerusalem was rebuilt?

So now we have it; their defense is fallacious, and the Passage cannot be interpreted in terms of Cyrus. Since Scripture designates no one as Messiah after Cyrus except the only One, and since such great and exalted qualities cannot be attributed to any temporal king, we conclude — and thus mightily overcome the error of the Jews — that the true Messiah came after the rebuilding of Jerusalem and prior to its destruction. For no Messiah was put to death before the destruction of Jerusalem except our Lord Jesus Christ, whom we call Messiah, that is, Christ, or the Anointed One. For this reason we will now examine the text, and see how exactly it conforms to our Lord Jesus Christ.

[224] I must address my remarks to those who are familiar with the histories of the kingdoms; those who are unfamiliar with them will probably not understand me. The surest method in this exegesis is to reckon backward, namely, beginning with the time when Jesus was baptized and began to preach. Gabriel is referring to this time when he says, "Until Messiah the prince" [Daniel 9:25], as if he would say: I speak of matters prior not to the birth of Christ but to the Hegemony of Christ, when He began to reign, to teach, to instruct, and to represent Himself as a Ruler to be

followed. This is the position taken by the Gospel writers especially Mark [1:1-15], and by Peter in Acts [1:22]. They begin the activities of Christ after His Baptism by John, as Luke [3:21-23] also does. That is when His Work really began. But Christ was then about thirty years old.

Now among those who are well versed in Scripture there is no doubt whatever that Gabriel is speaking here not of the normal week of seven days, but of year-weeks, in which seven years comprise one week. Scripture commonly employs such terminology. Therefore, the seventy weeks [Daniel 9:24] amount altogether to four hundred and ninety years.

If we now reckon from Christ's thirtieth year [Luke 3:23] backward through the Greek and Persian kingdoms for four hundred [225] and ninety years, we arrive exactly at the twentieth [Nehemiah 2:1] and last year of Cambyses, the third king or the second king in Persia after Cyrus, that Cyrus who permitted the building of the Temple at Jerusalem, II Chronicles 36[:22-23], and Ezra 1[:1-3]. However, more than forty-six years later Cambyses, and after him Darius Longimanus (who had previously vowed to do so [I Esdras 4:43]), permitted the building of the city of Jerusalem, which was done under Nehemiah. All this is set forth in the books of Nehemiah and Ezra. Thus, if we take the seventy

weeks as beginning with Nehemiah's departure from Persia [Nehemiah 2:1-11], that is, about the seventh year of Darius Longimanus, it corresponds exactly with our Christ.

Now Gabriel says [Daniel 9:24], "Seventy weeks (that is, four hundred and ninety years) are determined concerning your people [226] and your Holy City." This is as if we were to say: Your Nation of the Jews and the Holy City of Jerusalem have yet four hundred and ninety years to go; then they will both come to an end. As to what shall actually transpire, he says that transgression will be finished and forgiveness sealed and iniquity atoned for and everlasting righteousness brought in, and vision and prophecy fulfilled, that is, that satisfaction will be made for all sins, forgiveness of sins proclaimed, and the righteousness of faith preached, that righteousness which is eternally valid before God. This it is to which all the prophets and the whole of Scripture bear witness, as Paul in Romans 1[:17] and Peter in Acts 2[:38-39] testify. For before it there has been nothing but sin and work-righteousness, which is temporal and invalid in the Sight of God. I know of course that some invariably interpret the little Hebrew word "Hathuth" here as "sins"; I have taken it to mean "forgiveness" — as Moses sometimes does, and as it is used in Psalm 51[:7] — not without reason.

Next he shows when the period of seventy weeks begins, saying [Daniel 9:25], "From the going forth of the word to rebuild Jerusalem (that is, at the time of Nehemiah, in the twentieth year of Cambyses), until Messiah the Prince (that is, until the baptism of Christ in the Jordan), are seven weeks (that is, forty-nine years, during which Jerusalem was rebuilt in a troubled time, as the book of Nehemiah [2-6] teaches) and sixty-two weeks" (that is, 411 years after Jerusalem was rebuilt). This makes altogether [227] sixty-nine weeks, that is 483 years. There is still lacking one week, that is, seven years, to make the total of seventy weeks, or 490 years. He then shows what is to happen in that selfsame week, saying [Daniel 9:26]: "And after sixty-two weeks (note that this if after the first seven weeks of troubled rebuilding) Messiah shall be cut off (this did not happen at the beginning of the last week, but right in the middle of it, for Christ preached for three and one-half years, and Gabriel uses the term 'cut off', that is, taken from this life into the immortal life through death and His resurrection). And they shall not be His" (that is, those who crucify Him and drive Him from this world will no more belong to Him and be His People, but He will make unto Himself another people). Gabriel explains this and tells how they will not go unpunished for it, saying [Daniel 9:26]: "And the people of a prince who is to come (that is, Titus, the Roman emperor) shall destroy the city and that which is

holy, and its end shall come with violence (that is, it shall be destroyed with force and fury, as by a flood). And after the end of the war there shall remain the appointed desolation." (All of this happened just that way. Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed with frightful severity, and to this time have never come into the hands of the Jews or been restored to the former position of power despite the earnest efforts made in that direction. The [228] city today is still the ruin it was before, so that no one can deny that this prophecy and the actual situation before our eyes coincide perfectly.)

"And He shall confirm the Covenant with many in the one week" [Daniel 9:27]. (This is the period of three and one-half years during which Christ himself preached, plus the succeeding three and one-half years of apostolic activity). During these seven years the Gospel (which is God's covenant with us, that through Christ he will be merciful toward us) received its greatest impetus. Since that time it has never been so pure and mighty, for shortly thereafter heresy and error came to be mingled with it. "And in the middle of the week the sacrifice and offering shall cease" [Daniel 9:27] (that is, the law of Moses will no longer prevail), because Christ, after preaching for three and one-half years, will fulfill all things through his suffering, and thereafter provide for the preaching of a new sacrifice, etc.

Now let someone tell me: Where will one find a prince, or Messiah, or king, with whom all this accords so perfectly, as with our Lord Jesus Christ? Scripture and history agree so perfectly with one another that the Jews have nothing they can say to the contrary. They certainly are painfully conscious of their destruction, which is immeasurably greater than any they have ever endured. They cannot point to any transgression so great that they would have merited such punishment (because they feel it is not a sin that they crucified Jesus, and that they committed greater sins before that but suffered less punishment). It would be unthinkable that God would leave them so long without prophets unless they were finished and all Scripture fulfilled.

But there are still more prophecies, as for example in Haggai 2[:9], where God says of the rebuilt Temple, "The splendor of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former," which is also very conclusive; and Zechariah 8[:23], "In those [229] days ten men of all languages of the Gentiles shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying: We want to go with you; for we have heard that the Lord is with you," etc. There are many more, but it would take too long to discuss them all clearly and at length. For the present the two prophecies just cited are enough for a beginning.

If the Jews should take offense because we confess our Jesus to be a man, and yet true God, we will deal forcefully with that from Scripture in due time. But this is too harsh for a beginning. Let them first be suckled with milk, and begin by recognizing this man Jesus as the true Messiah; after that they may drink wine, and learn also that he is true God. For they have been led astray so long and so far that one must deal gently with them, as people who have been all too strongly indoctrinated to believe that God cannot be man.

Therefore, I would request and advise that one deal gently with them and instruct them from Scripture; then some of them may come along. Instead of this we are trying only to drive them by force, slandering them, accusing them of having Christian blood if they don't stink, and I know not what other foolishness. So long as we thus treat them like dogs, how can we expect to work any good among them? Again, when we forbid them to labor and do business and have any human fellowship with us, thereby forcing them into usury, how is that supposed to do them any good?

If we really want to help them, we must be guided in our dealings with them not by papal law but by the law of Christian love. We must receive them cordially, and permit them to trade and work with us, that they may have occasion and oppor-

tunity to associate with us, hear our Christian teaching, and witness our Christian life. If some of them should prove stiff-necked, what of it? After all, we ourselves are not all good Christians either.

Here I will let the matter rest for the present, until I see what I have accomplished. God grant us all his mercy. Amen!